

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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P 070517Z JUN 78
FM USINT BAGHDAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6285
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 1172

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS, PEPR, IZ, LE, SY
SUBJECT: IRAQI TROOPS IN LEBANON

REF: BAGHDAD 1103

1. LEBANESE AMBASSADOR SHAMMAS DID NOT, AS HE HAD HOPED, MEET WITH SADDAM HUSSEIN TO DISCUSS IRAQI RELATIONS WITH LEBANON, BUT HE DID HAVE A MEETING OF OVER FOUR HOURS WITH ABDUL MAJID AL-RAFIE, A BAATH PARTY NATIONAL COMMAND MEMBER WHO IS ALSO A LEBANESE. RAFIE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT IRAQ HAD 563 MEN FROM ITS CRACK SPECIAL FORCES UNIT IN LEBANON. HE SAID THAT IRAQI REGIME WOULD PULL THEM OUT AFTER THE ISRAELIS WITHDREW. SHAMMAS URGED THE DESIRABILITY OF A PULLOUT BEFORE JUNE 13, BUT RAFIE GAVE NO HINT OF IRAQI WILLINGNESS TO DO THIS. RAFIE DID SAY THAT IRAQI SPECIAL FORCES WOULD NOT INTERFERE WITH UNIFIL OPERATIONS. SHAMMAS CONFIRMED THAT FRENCH AMBASSADOR HAS DELIVERED SOME VERY STRONG MESSAGES IN THIS REGARDS.

2. RAFIE WAS UNABLE TO OFFER EQUAL ASSURANCES ABOUT IRREGULARS WHO MAKE UP ARAB LIBERATION FORCES. FOR STARTERS, CONFIDENTIAL

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HE IS UNSURE HOW MANY ALF PERSONNEL ARE IN LEBANON. SOME WERE THERE BEFORE FIGHTING, AND MOST ARE PALESTINIANS RATHER THAN IRAQIS. SHAMMAS HAS IMPRESSION THAT IRAQI COMMAND AND CONTROL OF ALF IS VERY WEAK. HE SAID IT IS ALF PERSONNEL RATHER THAN SPECIAL FORCES WHO HAVE CLASHED WITH PLO.

3. LOCAL SOURCES CLAIMING ACCESS TO IRAQI INTELLIGENCE

SAYS THERE IS MUCH GRUMBLING AMONG FAMILIES OF SPECIAL FORCES PERSONNEL. TOTAL BLACKOUT OF NEWS OF THEIR EXPLOITS HAS CONVEYED IMPRESSION THAT THEY WERE RISKING LIVES IN LEBANON FOR NO VALID PURPOSE. IRAQ MILITARY AUTHORITIES, ACCORDING TO SOURCE, WERE UNENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT LEBANON EXPEDITION VIEWING IT AS POLITICAL ACTION UNRELATED TO IRAQI SECURITY. THEY WORRY THAT SYRIANS OR LEBANESE RIGHTISTS WILL FIND MEANS TO BLOCK THE RETURN OF SPECIAL FORCES, IN EFFECT HOLDING THEM AS HOSTAGE TO FUTURE IRAQI GOOD BEHAVIOR. THEY RECALL IRAQI LOSSES IN LEBANESE FIGHTING OF 1976 AND DIFFICULTY OF BEATING A RETREAT.

5. IRAQ MAY BE PREPARING TO EXTRICATE ITSELF FROM LEBANON. ARRIVAL HERE JUNE 1 OF IRAQI AMBASSADOR TO SYRIA AND JUNE 4 OF A LEBANESE BAATHI LEADER LOYAL TO IRAQ WING OF THE PARTY MAY PREFACE REQUEST TO LEBANESE AND SYRIAN AUTHORITIES FOR SAFE CONDUCT.
PECK

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